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## A Note from State Executive Director Laurie Funderburk



### Greetings, South Carolina Producers!

I hope everyone had a wonderful Mother's Day weekend spending time with or remembering their Mother and the influential women in their lives. As we honor women this month, I would also like to thank all of the [women farmers](#) who play a vital role in South Carolina agriculture. Be it a family farm, an ag-related business or spousal support, we appreciate all you do to support our agriculture community. I would like to express my appreciation for my Farmer Mom, Betty Slade, for her endless love and encouragement, and for the many contributions she has made as a leader in the agriculture community. Thanks, Mom!

FSA has several programs beginning or underway this month. USDA announced that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin sending prefilled applications to eligible rice producers the week of May 8 for the new [Rice Production Program](#) (RPP), which will provide up to \$250

million in assistance to rice farmers based on 2022 planted and prevented planted acres. To apply for assistance through the RPP, producers must return their completed application to their local FSA county office by **Monday, July 10, 2023**.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin accepting applications for the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP) on Monday, May 15, 2023. OCCSP helps organic producers cover organic certification costs. **The deadline to apply is October 31, 2023**.

The deadline for the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) Phase Two](#), and the [Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program \(PARP\)](#) is fast approaching on **June 2, 2023**. It is important to clear up confusion about how to apply and what documents are required for participation. In [this farmers.gov blog](#), FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux does some myth-busting for ERP Phase Two and PARP.

I would also like to remind producers of the [Local Food Purchase Assistance Program \(LFPA\)](#), a federal grant program that offers a new market opportunity for socially disadvantaged producers to sell their produce while helping underserved populations within their communities.

Lastly, May is often a very busy month with planting, sports, and end-of-school activities. May is also Mental Health Awareness Month. This is an important reminder to check-in with your well-being and the wellbeing of those around you. USDA understands the many challenges and stresses farmers may face that is unique to the agricultural industry, and we are here to offer support and assistance through USDA's [Farmer and Rancher Stress Assistance Network](#) (FRSAN). [South Carolina Farm Bureau's SC AgriWellness program](#) also provides counseling services to South Carolina farmers and their families free of charge. And, as always, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours for anyone in need.

Again, thank you for all you do!

**Laurie Slade Funderburk**  
**State Executive Director**

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## USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production



USDA is seeking nominations for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations will be open to public from May 15, 2023, to July 15, 2023. The 12-member Committee, which assembled in March 2022, is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the committee provide input on policy development and to help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works

to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

Learn more [HERE](#).

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# USDA Announces Signup for New Rice Production Program



The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin sending prefilled applications to rice producers the week of May 8 for the new [Rice Production Program](#) (RPP), which will provide up to \$250 million in assistance to rice farmers based on 2022 planted and prevented planted acres.

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law H.R. 2617, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, which provided the authority and funding for USDA to make payments to rice producers based on data already on file with USDA, including planted acres and acres prevented from being planted.

## How to Apply

FSA is mailing pre-filled applications to producers using information on file with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) or FSA, as reported by rice producers through their crop insurance agents or FSA county offices.

To apply for assistance through the RPP, producers must return their completed FSA-174, *Rice Production Program Application*, to their recording FSA county office by close of business on Monday, July 10, 2023. Applications may be submitted either in person, by mail, email, or facsimile.

Producers who reported eligible rice to FSA by the acreage reporting deadline but do not receive a pre-filled application may still apply by visiting their local FSA office and completing the application by Monday, July 10, 2023. Producers who filed late or modified 2022 rice acreage reports will not be eligible for RPP.

## Program Payments

FSA will make an initial payment to eligible producers at a reduced payment rate of one cent per pound. If funds remain at the end of the application period, a second payment, not to exceed one cent per pound may be issued to eligible producers. To be eligible, a producer must have reported to FSA a share interest in eligible rice.

As directed by the omnibus legislation, FSA will calculate payments by multiplying the:

- Payment rate;
- Individual average actual production history (APH) as reported to RMA or the FSA-established yield; and
- Amount of certified rice acres determined by the number of planted acres and acres that were prevented from being planted.

If applicable, a prevented planted factor of 60% will be applied.

## Payment Limitation

The payment limitation for the program is set by statute and is higher if the farmer's average adjusted gross farm income (income from activities related to farming, ranching or forestry) is more than 75% of their average adjusted gross income (AGI). Specifically, a person or legal

entity with an average adjusted gross farm income of less than 75% of their average AGI cannot receive, directly or indirectly, more than \$125,000 in payments. Farmers who derive 75% or more of their average AGI from farming qualify for a \$250,000 payment limit. AGI is based on the three taxable years preceding the most immediately preceding complete tax year.

Rice farmers may visit their local county office to submit the appropriate form and certification (FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs*), if they qualify for and want to seek the higher payment limit.

For more information, view the [fact sheet](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## **USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program Assists Organic Producers recover costs associated with organic certification**



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will cover up to 75% of the costs associated with organic certification, up to \$750 per category, through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and handlers to apply for OCCSP by Oct. 31, 2023, for expenses incurred from Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2023.

As part of USDA's broader effort to support organic producers and in response to stakeholder feedback, this year FSA increased the cost share to the maximum amount allowed by statute.

### **Cost Share for 2023**

The cost share provides financial assistance for organic certification, and producers and handlers are eligible to receive 75% of the costs, up to \$750, for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling and state organic program fees (California only).

Producers have until Oct. 31, 2023, to file applications, and FSA will make payments as applications are received.

### **How to Apply**

To apply, organic producers and handlers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). As part of completing the OCCSP application, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses.

Organic producers and handlers may also apply for OCCSP through department of agriculture. Additional details can be found on the [OCCSP](#) webpage.

### **Opportunity for State Departments of Agriculture**

FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA will post a synopsis of the funding opportunity on [grants.gov](#) and will

electronically mail the notice of funding opportunity to all eligible state departments of agriculture.

If a state department of agriculture chooses to participate in OCCSP, both the state department of agriculture and FSA County Offices in that state will accept OCCSP applications and make payments to eligible certified operations. However, the producer or handler may only receive OCCSP assistance from either FSA or the participating state department of agriculture.

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## USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup starting **April 17 through May 26, 2023**. Among CRP enrollment opportunities, Grassland CRP is unique as a *working lands program*, allowing producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity and

conservation.

Protecting grasslands with CRP not only benefits participants with annual rental payments and cost share assistance; it also contributes positively to the economy of many regions, builds biodiversity, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

More than 2.4 million acres were enrolled through the 2022 Grassland CRP Signup from agricultural producers and private landowners. That signup – the highest ever for the program– reflects the continued success and value of investments in voluntary, producer-led, working lands conservation programs. The current total participation in Grassland CRP is 6.3 million acres, which is part of the 23 million acres enrolled in CRP opportunities overall.

Since 2021, the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers all CRP programs, has made several improvements to Grassland CRP to broaden the program's reach, including:

- Creating two [National Priority Zones](#) to put focus on environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion.
- Enhanced offers with 10 additional ranking points to producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans.
- Leverage the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities Tribal Nations in the Great Plains

### Other CRP Signups

#### General CRP

[General CRP signup closed on April 7](#). The program helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to

control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

### **Continuous CRP**

Under [Continuous CRP](#), producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Also available is the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states but has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

### **How to Sign Up**

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP, or any other CRP enrollment option, should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

### **More Information**

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov).

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# USDA Offers Livestock Disaster Program Flexibilities; Responds to Needs Expressed by Producers Hard-Hit by Natural Disasters

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has provided additional flexibilities and further enhanced disaster recovery assistance provided by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#), [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) and [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) in response to needs expressed by livestock producers across the U.S. who have experienced significant feed, forage and animal losses from natural disasters. **These livestock disaster program policy enhancements include an extended June 2, 2023, deadline to submit notices of loss and applications for payment for 2022 losses.** The deadline extension and program flexibilities are available to eligible producers nationwide who incurred losses from a qualifying natural disaster event.

LIP and ELAP reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died because of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed, and forage. LFP provides benefits for grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or wildfire. For fire, losses must occur on federally managed lands. ELAP provides benefits for grazing losses not covered under LFP.

## **New Program Applications for 2022**

FSA is accepting 2022 LIP notices of loss and applications for payment through June 2, 2023, for all covered livestock that may have been eligible in 2022.

Producers who did not sign up for ELAP assistance for hauling livestock, forage and feedstuff hauling or other losses covered under ELAP in 2022 can also apply through June 2, 2023.

FSA will accept LFP applications for only newly eligible covered livestock through June 2, 2023.

All required supporting documentation must be received and on file in the county office by the established deadline.

## **Revising 2022 Applications**

Producers who have a 2022 ELAP, LIP or LFP application on file with FSA as of the program deadline or were placed on an approved register, may revise their application with the newly updated eligible livestock no later than June 2, 2023.

## **Filing a Notice of Loss for ELAP due to 2022 and 2023 Drought**

To support program access for counties that do not currently have a 365-day grazing season, FSA is waiving the 30-day timeframe for producers to submit a notice of loss for the 2023 ELAP program year due to qualifying drought in calendar years 2022 or 2023. Producers can now submit a notice of loss from the date the loss is apparent, as far back as Jan. 1, 2023, for 2022 eligible losses and 2023 eligible losses that occur before June 2, 2023.

For counties that have a 365-day grazing season, producers must have a qualifying drought in the 2023 calendar year to be eligible for 2023 livestock, water and feed hauling in 2023.

### **More Information**

Livestock producers must provide evidence that livestock death was due to an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition. In addition, livestock producers should bring supporting evidence, including documentation of the number and kind of livestock that died, photographs or video records to document the loss, purchase records, veterinarian records, production records and other similar documents. Owners who sold injured livestock for a reduced price because the livestock were injured due to an adverse weather event, must provide verifiable evidence of the reduced sale of the livestock.

Producers can apply for ELAP, LFP and LIP benefits at their local FSA county office. For more information or to submit a notice of loss or an application for payment, please contact your [local FSA office](#) or visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover).

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## **Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses**

NAP provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

To receive payment, you had to purchase NAP coverage for 2023 crops and file a notice of loss the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.

For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap).

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# USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, visit [fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

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## FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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# Don't Miss Your Opportunity to be Represented in Ag Census Data

Time is running out to respond to the 2022 Census of Agriculture! Thank you to the producers who have already completed the ag census. If you have not responded, there is still time. **By federal law, the ag census questionnaire needs to be completed by everyone who received it, including landowners who lease land to producers, those involved in conservation programs, even those who may have received the ag census and did not farm in 2022.**

Strong response means strong data; these data will inform decisions that will help shape the future of American agriculture for the next five or six years. By not responding, you risk being unrepresented and therefore underserved in farm programs and funding, crop insurance rates, rural development, disaster assistance, and more. Return your ag census by mail or fill it out online at [agcounts.usda.gov](https://agcounts.usda.gov). Learn more at [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](https://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus) and respond today.

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## South Carolina Farm Service Agency

1927 Thurmond Mall  
Suite 100  
Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 803.806-3820  
Website: [www.fsa.usda.gov/sc](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/sc)

### State Executive Director

Laurie Funderburk  
[laurie.funderburk@usda.gov](mailto:laurie.funderburk@usda.gov)

### Administrative Officer

Kenn Jameson  
[kenn.jameson@usda.gov](mailto:kenn.jameson@usda.gov)

### Farm Programs Chief

Linda Williams  
[linda.c.williams@usda.gov](mailto:linda.c.williams@usda.gov)

### Farm Loan Programs Chief

William Shelley  
[william.shelley@usda.gov](mailto:william.shelley@usda.gov)

### State Committee:

Anthony Grant, Committee Chair

Lawrence Weathers

Mary Frances Koon

J.E.B. Wilson

Warren Dixon